

## **Slaters Pioneered Brick Business**

### **By Betty Fowler**

If you think General Refractories is the first brick business in Lehi, you're wrong. According to a family history of Nephi William and Ellen Colledge Slater, Grandpa Nephi Slater built what was probably one of the first, if not the first, brick business, in the State, in Lehi in 1893.

Early that year, Grandpa Slater applied for work at a clay pit, located south of the present General Refractories Company Lehi Plant, where Andrew Fjeld and Abel John Evans were molding and burning brick.

Unable to obtain employment, Grandpa Slater and his two brothers, James s. and Joseph Slater, and a brother-in-law, John Mitchell purchased an established clay deposit, where adobes were being "tramped out."

This is the present site of the General Refractories plant, about three miles northwest of Lehi, and was owned by William Simmons, Joseph Meiurs, and Newburn Butt.

It was the Slater brothers intention to improve the resistance of the popular adobe to weathering by substituting artificial heat for sun drying. This they did by first making and drying and hardening the adobe and then using the adobe to make kilns.

The kiln, when completed, were 12 feet high, 16 feet wide and 30 feet long and would accommodate 120,000 adobes. The heating and cooling process required a total of about 20 adobes and about 20 days for a complete cycle. Coal was used exclusively for producing the necessary best. The outside bricks which had been plastered, were removed and the interior brick inspected for spauling, cracking and other defects.

Usually six men were required. The whole operation was based upon a unit of 8,000 brick per day and the day was completed when the unit had been taken out of the pit and put in the kilns. The pay was two or three dollars per thousand delivered.

The old Third Ward Chapel was built with the Slater bricks. They were also used in lining the old Lehi High School gymnasium and also used in the old school in Alpine, Utah.

Many of the old homes in Lehi were built with the bricks as well as many homes and business houses in surrounding communities. A few highly burned brick were used in lining wells where they have remained for the last half century.

A few years ago, Roy and R.J. Slater were in Mercur, Utah where they found and bought some brick with the initial "S" on them, indicating that they were original bricks made at the Slater Brick Yard.

Being a very generous and trusting man, Grandpa Slater (Nephi) allowed many people to buy brick on credit and then found it difficult and many times impossible to get the money from the people who owed him, so after 32 years in the business, in 1925, he was forced to sell the brick yard to Olaf Holmstead and Chase Featherstone.